

Article - Public Utility Companies

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§8–201.

(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

(2) “Eligible subscriber” means an individual who is certified to a local telephone company by the Department of Human Resources as receiving:

(i) assistance under Title 5, Subtitle 3 of the Human Services Article;

(ii) assistance from the electric universal service program under § 7–512.1 of this article;

(iii) assistance from the Maryland Energy Assistance Program under Title 5, Subtitle 5A of the Human Services Article;

(iv) State-funded public assistance benefits; or

(v) Supplemental Security Income under Title XVI of the federal Social Security Act.

(3) “Telephone lifeline service” means local telephone services provided to eligible subscribers at a discount in accordance with this section.

(b) At the direction of the Commission, a local telephone company with more than 10,000 subscribers shall offer telephone lifeline service to eligible subscribers subject to the following conditions:

(1) no other local voice telephone service may be provided to the dwelling unit of the eligible subscriber applying for telephone lifeline service; and

(2) an inside wiring maintenance plan is not provided to the eligible subscriber.

(c) (1) An eligible subscriber may select a telephone lifeline service under either paragraph (2) or (3) of this subsection.

(2) An eligible subscriber who selects telephone lifeline service under this paragraph:

(i) shall receive:

1. an individual residential local exchange access line; and

2. the first 30 residential local untimed messages each billing

month at no additional charge;

(ii) shall be charged:

1. 50% of the lowest applicable and approved federal and State tariff rates for the access line and included residential local untimed messages, minus any applicable waiver of federal tariff provisions for eligible subscribers, plus all applicable federal, State, and local taxes;

2. the full applicable tariff rates for all other residential local untimed messages; and

3. except as otherwise provided in subsection (d) of this section, the full applicable tariff rates for all other services; and

(iii) may not be provided any premium services, including foreign zone or foreign exchange service.

(3) An eligible subscriber who selects telephone lifeline service under this paragraph:

(i) shall receive an individual residential local exchange access line with unlimited residential local untimed messages for a monthly charge of \$10; and

(ii) may purchase up to two value-added services at the full applicable tariff rates.

(d) The telephone company shall charge to an eligible subscriber 50% of the applicable filed tariff for:

(1) repairs to inside wiring; and

(2) installation and connection of residential dial access service to one termination in the dwelling unit of the eligible subscriber.

(e) The telephone company shall charge to the eligible subscriber all applicable federal, State, and local taxes and fees.

(f) (1) A telephone company may not require payment of an order processing charge or line change charge to change an eligible subscriber to telephone lifeline service from any other class of residential telephone service.

(2) A telephone lifeline service subscriber who no longer qualifies as an eligible subscriber may not be charged a fee to change from telephone lifeline service to any other class of residential telephone service.

(g) (1) A telephone company may not request a deposit to secure payment in connection with the initial installation or connection of telephone lifeline service.

(2) An eligible subscriber applying for service may be denied service if the eligible subscriber:

(i) has an outstanding unpaid net telephone debt of \$100 or more for prior telephone service; and

(ii) has not established a reasonable payment plan to satisfy the debt.

(3) An eligible subscriber may not be denied service if the eligible subscriber has an outstanding unpaid net telephone debt of less than \$100 for prior telephone service.

(h) (1) To the extent allowed by federal law, the Department of Human Resources shall provide to local telephone companies that offer telephone lifeline service monthly electronic access to a file containing a list of all individuals who receive assistance from any of the programs listed in subsection (a)(2) of this section.

(2) To obtain access to the file, a local telephone company must enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Human Resources that governs access to use, confidentiality, and retention of the file.

(3) The grant of access to the file satisfies the certification requirement of subsection (a)(2) of this section.

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